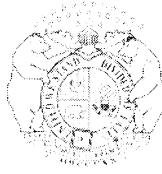


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February 14, 2007

Dear MRDD Stakeholders:

This past month I have continued to meet with people throughout the state who either provide for or receive supports and services from the Division of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. As you know one of my priorities is to improve communication between the Division and all our partners, which includes each of you.

First, the Recommendation Twenty-Four Stakeholder Committee met on January 24 and February 5, 2007. The committee, of which I am chairing and Mahree Skala is facilitating, is comprised of thirteen individuals representing provider organizations, SB 40 Boards, family members or guardians of a person with a disability, self-advocates, Regional Center employees, Missouri Protection and Advocacy Services, and the Missouri Planning Council.

During the first meeting I shared the vision for the regional centers structure and functions. Relative information can be found on the Division's website at <http://www.dmh.mo.gov/mrdd/stakeholder24.htm>. In addition, three proposals on public/private partnerships were presented. Jhan Hurn and Scott Shepherd presented the Missouri Association of Rehabilitation Facilities: New Directions for Missourians with Developmental Disabilities; Roger Garlich presented the Programs of Excellence; and Alicia Nissen presented the Jasper County Sheltered Facilities Board Pilot Project. A side by side summary of the proposals can be found at the internet address noted above. The committee has five additional meetings scheduled prior to the submission of the final report on May 1, 2007. They are February 21, March 7, 21, April 4, and 18. Committee meetings are open to the public and I welcome your attendance.

Secondly, as I mentioned in my December 28 letter, we are currently looking at the roles and functions of the Regional Centers and have a workgroup discussing standardization based upon the Regional Center Review that occurred in 2006. Also as a result of the review, one of the Division's focuses will be to reduce caseload sizes. Reduction of caseloads will allow staff to make sure that individuals in community placement are in a safe and healthy environment. During the last couple months, I have been able to go to each Regional Center and meet with staff to share our future vision and functions, obtain their input and answer any questions they may have.

I also want to take a moment to provide an update on the Missouri College of Direct Support (MoCDS). The Missouri College of Direct Support is a competency based on-line training for direct support professionals and front line supervisors that is based upon the National Community Support Skill Standards. As some of you know, MoCDS is a partnership of 21 agencies, the Division of MRDD, Missouri Association of County Developmental Disability Services (MACDDS), Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities, Direct Support Professionals of Missouri, UMKC-Institute for Human Development, University of Missouri Extension, and the Missouri Chapter of the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD-formerly AAMR). The Division is committed to the development of a skilled workforce that meets the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families and creates a support infrastructure that is based upon national standards. Congratulations to the 62 individuals who have completed all 13 courses, which includes a total of 67 lessons, and the on the job assessment to receive their certificate. Job well done!!

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to Missourians with developmental disabilities and their families and I look forward to working with you as we create supports and services that reflect cutting edge, best practices.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bernard Simons". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a stylized "S".

Bernard Simons, Director
Division of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities

BS:km

cc: MRDD Exec Team
Regional Center Directors